

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA calls for accountability following Hawks Take-Down Operation on 2018 Mpumalanga Department of Education infrastructure tender
DATE	23 February 2026
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The Public Servants Association (PSA) noted the media briefing in Mbombela on 22 February 2026 by the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation (Hawks), during which a coordinated Take-Down Operation was announced in relation to a 2018 multi-million rand tender in the Mpumalanga Department of Education.

According to the information presented, the tender related primarily to school-infrastructure projects. It is alleged that several schools were either never constructed or were built below approved specifications, despite substantial public funds having been allocated for this purpose. Approximately 41 persons are expected to be arrested in connection with the alleged fraudulent scheme. These include government officials, private persons, religious leaders, and various entities suspected of having unlawfully benefited from the tender. Hawks teams have been deployed nationally to execute the arrests. As of 22 February 2026, one suspect had been arrested in Cape Town and another in Nelspruit. The operation is understood to have commenced in Barberton, Mpumalanga, as part of a coordinated national law-enforcement initiative.

The PSA condemns corruption involving funds earmarked for education infrastructure. Schools are not political projects - they are pillars of community development and gateways to opportunity for learners. When infrastructure funds are diverted, inflated, or abused, this constitutes not financial misconduct and an assault on the future of children and the dignity of communities.

Beyond individual accountability, this matter raises serious concerns regarding governance failures, supply-chain management, contract oversight, and consequence management in the Department. Corruption on this scale cannot occur without systemic weaknesses or deliberate collusion. The PSA therefore calls for a comprehensive review of procurement and infrastructure oversight mechanisms in the Department of Education. Consequence management should be strengthened against officials found to have neglected their fiduciary responsibilities. Lifestyle audits should be implemented where legally permissible, with swift recovery of misappropriated funds through asset forfeiture processes, and enhanced protection for whistleblowers who expose wrongdoing.

Whilst the PSA takes a firm stance against corruption, the Union emphasises that implicated persons are entitled to due process and the presumption of innocence. Investigations must proceed lawfully, without political interference, and accountability must be applied consistently without fear, favour, or selective targeting. The PSA is committed to promoting ethical governance in the public service whilst safeguarding the labour rights of employees in accordance with labour legislation and collective agreements.

Public trust in the education system depends on transparency, accountability, and visible consequence management.

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